Author's response to reviews

Title: Computer work and self-reported variables on anthropometric, computer usage, work ability, productivity, pain, and physical activity

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Response to Reviewer 1 comments

Manuscript: BMC Musculoskeletal Disorders MS: 9226466159405262 - Computer work and self-reported variables on anthropometric, computer usage, work ability, productivity, pain, and physical activity

Thank you for your constructive and useful comments that have contributed to improve the readability and overall quality of the manuscript.

This manuscript gives an impression of being a bit unfinished. However, the content seems sound, so it should be worthy of publishing when it is further processed by the authors. Due to the present state of the manuscript, I do not systematically go into details at present.

Major comments

The authors report in the introduction and the methods that data is collected for a number of variables. However, several of these variables are not reported in the results section. Why? I think one big advantage with the electronic publishing is the possibility to provide all data, so I urge the authors to do so. Some of these variables are commented upon in the discussion, which I find not good as long as the data are not given in the results section. One example of this is the reference to correlation between pain intensity and number of pain locations (first paragraph of the discussion section).

Please give reference to the tables and figures in the results section. That makes it easier to follow your presentation of your data.

Please discuss more thoroughly the methodological limitations of your data collection, including the fact that all data are collected at the same moment and with the same type of instrument (self report in a questionnaire), the fact that all data are self report (probably you could draw into your discussion the limitations of self report on i.e. work task found by other research groups), and the very selected material (do you have some data on the total cohort, i.e. gender distribution, age distribution and so forth, in order to give an idea of the representativeness).

You state that you consider the work task to be similar for all subjects because all followed regulations from the Danish working environment authority. This argument is not obvious, at least not for a reader not familiar with the Danish conditions, so please elaborate more on this point.

Responses: You are right about the variables, not all were mentioned in the results section. We added a new table presenting the number of pain locations (Table 5). All variables are now shown in tables/figure. Table 1 reports anthropometrics (gender, height, body mass, body mass index, dominant side), health related variables (pain caused by an accident, suffering from e.g. cardiovascular, respiratory diseases or arthritis) and life style variables (pain killers). Table 2 shows work-related, work ability and productivity variables. Table 3 reports musculoskeletal complaints (pain duration and intensity in the neck/dominant shoulder, pain duration and intensity in the dominant elbow/forearm). Table 4 goes further into details reporting pain intensity within the last 7 days and 3 months for forearm, elbow, neck and, shoulder. Table 5 (new) shows the number of body part with pain (focus was put on the dominant arm for the summation as more than 92% of the participants were right-handed). Table 6 reports the level of physical activity during leisure time.

We also checked that all the discussed results are reported in the Results section (thanks for your input about pain intensity and number of pain locations). We decided not to report NS correlations to facilitate the reading of the Results section. This is stated.

We added references to tables and figures in the Results section as requested. See highlighted changes.

We have also added comments regarding the limitations of our study, especially the fact that only self-reported data were collected and analysed. See highlighted changes in the Discussion.

We have added information about the distribution of the entire cohort in terms of age and gender. This gives important element concerning the representativeness of the study.

A reference concerning the use of quantitative sensory testing among computer users has also been added.

We see you point concerning the “work task” issue. We are actually are unable to substantiate this statement. Thus, we reformulated the sentence in the revised version. The key element is that all office workers use a computer for a substantial part of their working day without any special physical loads. See changes on Page 5.

Minor comments
Abstract:
I suggest that you omit the reference to a special interest for female gender, as this is not the case in the rest of the manuscript. You report on both gender, but find as expected the women report more pain. Delete the third sentence (starting with "Despite ") and delete the word "female" in the first sentence of the Conclusion. I also suggest that you give the number 690 and not 804 as the number of subjects in the methods part of the abstract.

Responses: We have amended that abstract as suggested (concerning female gender). The third sentence was deleted as well as the word “female” in the first sentence of the conclusion. We also corrected the number of participants (see highlighted change).

Methods:
Give also the number 690 in the first paragraph (instead of waiting till the end of the section) . Otherwise the readers get bewildered when looking at Table1.

Responses: Done. See highlighted change.

Comment regarding language: The language is mostly good. However, there are several examples of sentences that need reformulation, and some sentence lack an obvious meaning. Please, be aware of this when correcting the manuscript and possibly use some text editing expertise. If you have a manuscript with the same line numbers as the one I got, examples of bad language are i.e. found in page 3, line 24 (at least a word missing), line 29 (is ‘essence’ a good expression?), page 4, line1-3, page 5, line 1-4, page 6, line 3 (a bit unclear what ‘both type of workers’ refer to – I’m hesitant to define workers with and without pain as to types of workers, but find no other logical reference).

Responses: Thank you for these comments. We have corrected erroneous wording/sentences in agreement with your input. We have also proof-read the entire manuscript. See highlighted changes.
Response to Reviewer 2 comments
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Thank you for your extremely positive evaluation of the manuscript.
Response to Editor comments
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Thank you for your constructive and useful comments that have contributed to improve the readability and overall quality of the manuscript.

1.) Name of ethics committee:
Please update your ethics statement to include the name of the ethics committee that approved your study.

Response: We added the name of the ethics committee. See highlighted change.